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THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

Written statement*/ submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[5 February 2001]

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*/ This written statement is issued, unedited, as received in English and Spanish from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Society for Threatened Peoples is deeply concerned to know the latest development with respect to indigenous peoples in Colombia; particularly those living in the Southern Zone and the U'wa people, those living close to the border with Venezuela. The latter ones have already been threatened for several years by oil exploration, while the Southern peoples recently are starting to suffer the immediate impacts of the so called Plan Colombia. Fumigation of drug plants from aircrafts, the expected contamination of vast areas caused by oil exploitation and the general increase of violence – imposed by state security forces, death squads and guerrilla movements – are only the most obvious of the destructive consequences of development programs and projects which still follow the classic concepts of modern economic growth and building of a nationstate. Not only do these undermine any self determination of indigenous peoples in chosing the relevant development criteria themselves, but the imposed projects are not even compatible with the regions and its non-indigenous population in general.

Incongruent to what is known about these projects at scientific level, also neither on political nor on economical level, the specific development of indigenous peoples is accordingly recognised or even garanteed; although Colombia did ratify ILO Convention 169 and is obliged to further protect indigenous peoples' rights. The maintainance of their livelihood in accordance with their traditional rules is paramount for their survival as distinct people. In addition, indigenous peoples in Colombia have shown - in the past and today as well - their capacity to sustain themselves socially, environmentally, culturally, an politically, as well as economically and technologically.

Therefore, speaking on these development issues with respect to indigenous peoples in Colombia, an urgent need exists to coordinate political and econimical operations in order to garantee that a minimal level condition exists for survival. These conditions in part are alreday established as norms forming an integral part of international law and human rights. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights is one of the main trustees of these rights. With respect to the right of development, we request the Commission to urge the Colombian government
a) to abolish its disastrous Plan Colombia, and
b) to hold a moratorium on oil drilling at the area of U'wa people

The Commission on Human Rights also is asked to make its own survey on the impacts of Plan Colombia on indigenous peoples in the South of Colombia.